

HOUSE BILL 216

E1
HB 187/25 – JUD

(PRE-FILED)

6lr0930
CF SB 140

By: Delegates Kaufman, Fair, Feldmark, Pena-Melnyk, ~~and Tomlinson~~
Tomlinson, Cardin, Phillips, Stinnett, Simmons, McComas, Moreno, Arikan,
Taylor, Simpson, Moon, Conaway, and Woods

Requested: September 23, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Judiciary

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 6, 2026

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Criminal Law – Benefits Exploitation**

3 FOR the purpose of prohibiting a person from knowingly recruiting, harboring,
4 transporting, or obtaining an individual for the purpose of appropriating the
5 government benefits of an individual for the benefit of the person or another by
6 certain means; prohibiting a person from knowingly benefitting in a certain manner
7 from participation in a venture that violates a certain provision of this Act;
8 prohibiting a person from aiding, abetting, or conspiring with one or more persons to
9 violate a certain provision of this Act; and generally relating to benefits exploitation.

10 BY adding to

11 Article – Criminal Law

12 Section 8–524

13 Annotated Code of Maryland

14 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

15 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
16 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

17 **Article – Criminal Law**

18 **8–524.**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
2 INDICATED.

3 (2) “COERCION” MEANS:

4 (I) 1. CAUSING OR THREATENING TO CAUSE BODILY HARM
5 TO AN INDIVIDUAL; OR

6 2. PHYSICALLY RESTRAINING OR CONFINING OR
7 THREATENING TO PHYSICALLY RESTRAIN OR CONFINE AN INDIVIDUAL;

8 (II) EXPOSING OR DISSEMINATING OR THREATENING TO
9 EXPOSE OR DISSEMINATE ANY FACT OR INFORMATION THAT WOULD TEND TO
10 SUBJECT AN INDIVIDUAL TO CRIMINAL OR IMMIGRATION PROCEEDINGS, HATRED,
11 CONTEMPT, OR RIDICULE;

12 (III) DESTROYING, CONCEALING, REMOVING, CONFISCATING, OR
13 POSSESSING ANY ACTUAL OR PURPORTED PASSPORT OR OTHER IMMIGRATION
14 DOCUMENT, OR ANY OTHER ACTUAL OR PURPORTED GOVERNMENT IDENTIFICATION
15 DOCUMENT, OF AN INDIVIDUAL;

16 (IV) PROVIDING A CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE TO AN
17 INDIVIDUAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMPELLING THE INDIVIDUAL TO ENGAGE IN AN
18 ACTION AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL’S WILL;

19 (V) CAUSING OR THREATENING TO CAUSE FINANCIAL HARM TO
20 AN INDIVIDUAL OR EXERTING FINANCIAL CONTROL OVER A DISABLED OR ELDERLY
21 ADULT; OR

22 (VI) DEPRIVING AN INDIVIDUAL OF MEDICAL CARE.

23 (3) “CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE” HAS THE MEANING
24 STATED IN § 5–101 OF THIS ARTICLE.

25 (4) “DECEPTION” MEANS:

26 (I) CREATING OR CONFIRMING ANOTHER PERSON’S
27 IMPRESSION OF AN EXISTING FACT OR PAST EVENT THAT IS FALSE AND THAT THE
28 ACCUSED KNOWS OR BELIEVES TO BE FALSE; OR

29 (II) PROMISING BENEFITS OR THE PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES
30 THAT THE ACCUSED DOES NOT INTEND TO DELIVER OR PERFORM OR KNOWS WILL
31 NOT BE DELIVERED OR PERFORMED.

1 (5) “EXPLOITATION” MEANS ILLEGALLY OR IMPROPERLY USING AN
2 INDIVIDUAL OR AN INDIVIDUAL’S GOVERNMENT BENEFITS THROUGH UNDUE
3 INFLUENCE, HARASSMENT, DURESS, FALSE REPRESENTATION, FALSE PRETENSE,
4 OR OTHER SIMILAR MEANS FOR PERSONAL PROFIT OR ADVANTAGE OR FOR THE
5 PROFIT OR ADVANTAGE OF ANOTHER.

6 (6) “GOVERNMENT BENEFITS” INCLUDES:

7 (I) MEDICARE BENEFITS;

8 (II) MEDICAID BENEFITS;

9 (III) TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
10 BENEFITS;

11 (IV) SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR
12 WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) BENEFITS;

13 (V) SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
14 (SNAP) BENEFITS;

15 (VI) SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS;

16 (VII) SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY (SSDI) BENEFITS;

17 (VIII) VETERANS BENEFITS;

18 (IX) PENSION BENEFITS;

19 (X) TEMPORARY DISABILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TDAP)
20 BENEFITS; AND

21 (XI) PUBLIC ASSISTANCE TO ADULTS (PAA) BENEFITS.

22 (7) “ISOLATION” MEANS PREVENTING AN INDIVIDUAL FROM HAVING
23 CONTACT WITH FRIENDS OR FAMILY, A WELFARE AGENCY, LAW ENFORCEMENT
24 OFFICERS, HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS OR ENTITIES
25 WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDIVIDUAL OR AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL’S
26 WISHES.

27 (B) (1) A PERSON MAY NOT, THROUGH DECEPTION, COERCION,
28 EXPLOITATION, ~~ISOLATION, OR ANY OTHER MEANS~~ OR ISOLATION, KNOWINGLY
29 RECRUIT, HARBOR, TRANSPORT, OR OBTAIN AN INDIVIDUAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF

1 APPROPRIATING THE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS OF AN INDIVIDUAL FOR PERSONAL
2 BENEFIT OR TO BENEFIT ANOTHER.

3 (2) A PERSON MAY NOT KNOWINGLY BENEFIT FINANCIALLY OR BY
4 RECEIVING ANYTHING OF VALUE FROM PARTICIPATION IN A VENTURE THAT
5 VIOLATES PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

6 (3) A PERSON MAY NOT AID, ABET, OR CONSPIRE WITH ONE OR MORE
7 PERSONS TO VIOLATE PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

8 (C) ~~A PERSON WHO VIOLATES SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY~~
9 ~~OF A FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING~~
10 ~~25 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$15,000 OR BOTH.~~

11 (1) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS
12 INVOLVED IS LESS THAN \$1,500, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS
13 SECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO
14 IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 1 YEAR OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$500 OR BOTH.

15 (2) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS
16 INVOLVED IS AT LEAST \$1,500 BUT LESS THAN \$25,000, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES A
17 PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS
18 SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 5 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING
19 \$10,000 OR BOTH.

20 (3) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS
21 INVOLVED IS AT LEAST \$25,000 BUT LESS THAN \$100,000, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES
22 A PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS
23 SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 10 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING
24 \$15,000 OR BOTH.

25 (4) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS
26 INVOLVED IS \$100,000 OR MORE, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS
27 SECTION IS GUILTY OF A FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO
28 IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 20 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$25,000 OR
29 BOTH.

30 (D) (1) EACH VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE CONSIDERED A
31 SEPARATE OFFENSE.

32 (2) A SENTENCE IMPOSED UNDER THIS SECTION MAY BE SEPARATE
33 FROM AND CONSECUTIVE TO OR CONCURRENT WITH A SENTENCE FOR ANY CRIME
34 BASED ON THE ACT ESTABLISHING THE VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION.

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
2 October 1, 2026.

Approved:

Governor.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.

President of the Senate.